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**POST-POLITICAL MATERIALIZATIONS
A CROSS-SCALAR MAPPING OF GENTRIFICATION
PROCESSES IN GUADALAJARA, MEXICO.**

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POST-POLITICAL MATERIALIZATIONS

A cross-scalar mapping of gentrification processes in Guadalajara, Mexico

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ABSTRACT

The paper sheds light on the recent spatial transformations in the core of the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area (GMA), in western Mexico, by critically analysing the contested socio-political dynamics and visualizing its materializations in the urban landscape at different scales. The actually existent entrepreneurial urban governance is addressed, arguing that the free-market logic imposed on the urban development has evacuated the properly political dimension from the urban, in which the impossibility to drive spatial transformations through accountable and democratic ways portrays a 'post-political' condition in the city; ultimately generating material and symbolic expressions of gentrification. The paper unravels the vengeful spatial transformations encouraging more expensive forms of consumption in the most symbolic part of the city: the historic centre. In parallel, a rapid verticalization of the built environment is paving the way for a 'reconquest' of the low-density metropolitan centre by the wealthy classes. Such architectural materializations, along with the rearticulation of retail and commercial practices are backed by a 'redensification' discourse, and advanced through strategies that rely on gentrification as the only option for renewing and repopulating the central metropolitan area.

KEYWORDS: retail gentrification, redensification, revanchism, post-politics,

1. PROBLEMATIZATION OF GUADALAJARA'S BUILT AND POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

1.1 Past and present conditions of Guadalajara Metropolitan Area

The Guadalajara Metropolitan Area (GMA) covers more than 61,000 hectares and with a population of 4.7 million inhabitants is positioned as the second largest conurbation of the country after Greater Mexico City. In the past 20 years, the city shared a common transformation pattern present in many Latin American cities; the central city tends to decrease, while at the same time, the periphery keeps expanding (Cruz Solis 2012). This situation has generated a substantial transformation of both the socio-economic dynamics and the built environment. Regarding the latter, the city witnessed a huge horizontal expansion in the form of a low-density patchwork, enabled by a combination of a market-led culture in urban growth, decentralization of planning institutions, (de)regulation of peri-urban land, availability of governmental funds for a rampant housing construction led by real estate developers, and most importantly, an hegemonic cultural acceptance of home ownership as the ultimate realization of well-being (Eibenschutz & Carrillo, 2011; García Peralta, 2010; Harner, 2009; Jones & Ward, 1998). Simultaneously, abandonment, vacancy and neglect can be found in the core of the metropolis giving way to a multitude of urban voids (Fausto Brito y Rábago, 2001; Flores & Testori, 2014), while the gentry concentrate in luxury enclaves, adding more unconnected pieces to the already fragmented metropolitan area (Cabrales, 2001). These transformations coincide with a gradual adoption of the neoliberal ideology and policy in the country (Harner, 2009). As David Harvey (2012) suggests, “cultural values flourish remarkably when promoted and subsidized by state policies” (p. 50), and in our case, “*Mexican neoliberal discourse enhances the individual over collective identities*” (Harner, 2009:466), giving rise to a massive single-housing landscape in the periphery. In Guadalajara such conditions generated a displacement phenomenon of practically all population sectors –from low to upper-middle classes– towards the newly built urban fringes (Cabrales, 2001; Cruz Solis, 2012; Harner, 2009). Faced with the negative consequences of such copious urban sprawl –inefficient mobility, sociospatial segregation, environmental risks but overall financial issues¹–, local authorities in coordination with national agendas have undertaken a series of actions with the intention of ‘redensify’ the urban core. Official redensification efforts in the context of Guadalajara have a twofold objective. The most evident is to renew the urban fabric in certain areas after decades of deterioration and lack of investment, but also to repopulate the ‘inner city’ on the interest of augmenting the tax base of Guadalajara’s central municipality –one of the most indebted in Mexico². This is an imperative within the current political-economic context, where cities –and municipalities in this case– are plunged into fierce inter-urban competition dynamics (Harvey, 2001) and are “*increasingly dependent upon their own revenue-generating capacity*” (Becker & Müller, 2013, p.81). These conditions serve as background for a gradual adoption of contextualized entrepreneurial urban governance schemes in the last years, in which the priorities are set in attracting localized investments over properly social issues (Crossa, 2009; Harvey, 2001).

¹ Recent studies have demonstrated that the massive housing construction in the peripheries has been a total failure in economic terms see: Valenzuela, A. (2013)

² By May of 2015, Guadalajara was the second most indebted municipality of Mexico. See: El Financiero. 2015.

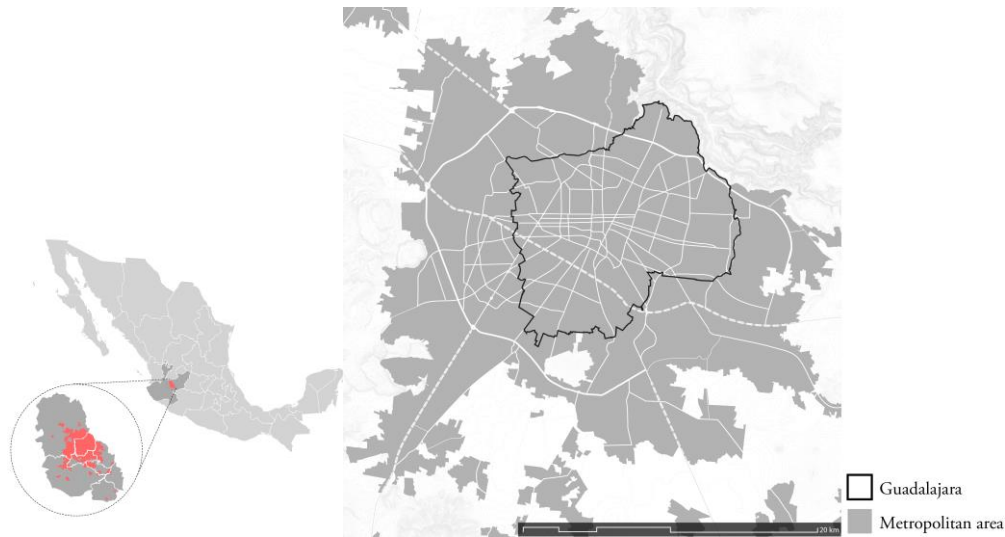


Figure 1. Location of Guadalajara Metropolitan Area. **Source:** Elaborated by the author from INEGI data.

Moreover, the entrepreneurial urban governance and free-market logic imposed on the urban development has evacuated the properly political dimension from the urban, and the impossibility to drive urban transformations through accountable and democratic ways portrays a 'post-political' condition in the city (Wilson & Swyngedouw, 2014). Such condition here is understood as nothing else than the incapacity of the inhabitants to democratically transform the city based on their own needs and desires; in which the social welfare has been subordinated to the needs of capital accumulation and its related practices with the assistance of insulated institutional apparatuses (Wilson & Swyngedouw, 2014; Harvey 2012). This 'partition of the sensible' in the urban terrain accentuates social exclusion and generates material and symbolic expressions of gentrification (Janoschka et al., 2013). In line with national policies, the municipal government of Guadalajara is mobilizing city space for attracting localized investments by posing gentrification as the *only* alternative to renew, redensify, and repopulate the city (Slater 2014). Within this context, urban policies and strategies are reduced to a "*consensual management of economic necessity*" (Wilson & Swyngedouw, 2014:7) that materializes in an asymmetric -luxurious and at the same time precarious- cityscape, coupled with vengeful programs for 'recovering' and 'cleaning' the historic centre; an urban landscape shaped by the idiosyncrasy of the local and foreign elites, which effectively excludes all those voices who are positioned outside the consensus and who oppose such 'revanchist' urban transformations (Swyngedouw, 2011; Smith, 1996). Within this setting, real estate businesses and its architectural manifestations thrive with little regard for the social and environmental dimensions. The paper addresses the agency of growth coalitions pushing verticalization and retail gentrification, examining how gentrification processes shape new urban spaces and subjectivities in the post-political city. Moreover, by inquiring in which way the previously mentioned conditions are played out in space and reflected in the built fabric, the next chapter visualizes the differentiated but nevertheless simultaneous gentrification processes taking place in the GMA at different spatial scales: revanchist transformations remain focalized in the relatively delimited area of the historic centre, while residential gentrification encompasses a wider stratum of the metropolis, manifested in a more dispersed way through punctual vertical housing developments. Thus the analysis combines in-depth observations on site focusing on the social dynamics and morpho-typological

characteristics of these different spaces using interpretative cartographies; reflecting its spatial specificities with historic political-economic processes. This allows identifying key actors, issues, and forces, unravelling the gentrification paradigm in Guadalajara.

2. CROSS-SCALAR GENTRIFICATION PROCESSES

2.1 Building vacancy: The verticalization of Guadalajara

Over the last couple of years, multiple levels of government, from federal to municipal, have encouraged infill (re)development backed by the *Programa Nacional de Desarrollo Urbano 2014-2018* [National Program of Urban Development] and the *Programa Nacional de Vivienda 2014-2018* [National Housing Program 2014-2018] announced by president Peña-Nieto in his early mandate. The first objective of these programs is to restrict the unsustainable suburbanization of the country while consolidating the existent cities (DOF, 2014). Local authorities have welcomed the national agenda and have embarked in a –until today unsuccessful– reformulation of urban planning instruments in order to encourage an ordered process of redensification. However, the history of urban planning in Guadalajara is characterized by a perpetual defiance and contempt for the official norms and regulations (García Rojas, 2002). The many ‘irregular settlements’ built by the dispossessed that compose the ‘first metropolitan ring’ (Cruz Solís 2012), to the luxurious vertical developments shaping the urban landscape of today, endorse the divergence between what is planned and what is realized, between imposition and subversion. These contemptuous urbanisms coming from all parts of the social spectrum not just reinforce the idea that in Mexico, the law is always a negotiation, but it gives us a clue as to how to problematize the historical development of the city and the current urban transformations conceived by authorities. Added to this, governments are perceived as epitomes of cronyism, incompetence, and corruption (Jimenez y García, 2014). These accusations are reflected in the urban landscape. Taking advantage of the low-rise urban fabric, so characteristic of Guadalajara, a constellation of new luxurious towers is emerging in the central part of the city as materializations of corrupted urban planning practices, steered by real estate developers in complicity with (actual and former) public servants [fig.2]. The majority of these new estates violate at least land-use and/or density regulations. They are in this sense ‘informal’ settlements, built by the constant necessity of the elites to reinvest in and profit from the urban development (Harvey, 2012). A mixture of corporate greed, legal loopholes, and limited agency of civil society pave the way to a booming and ‘insurgent’ real estate market targeted to the wealthy classes. This is not an isolated case, as it is possible to read how the divergent forces of the state, the market and civil society have materialized in the built fabric. The ‘formal’ social-interest housing developments built during the neoliberalization of the peripheries during the 1990’s-2000’s are also characterized for challenging the formal/informal and legal/illegal paradigms, as John Harner explains: “...in Guadalajara land was subdivided into formal subdivisions [commonly known as *fraccionamientos*] and sold to individual owners, giving the appearance of an orderly and official development process with legal land tenure. Yet developers failed to introduce the services and urban facilities required by law, hence they are *formal* developments with security of tenure but they remain *outside the law*” (2009:471). The historical subversion of urban ‘orders’ configures an urbanism and urbanization solely determined by (assymetric) power relations, “producing an oligarchical [urban] governing in which political power seamlessly fuses with economic might” (Rancière 2006, cited in Swyngedouw, 2011), rendering visible the post-political condition of the city.

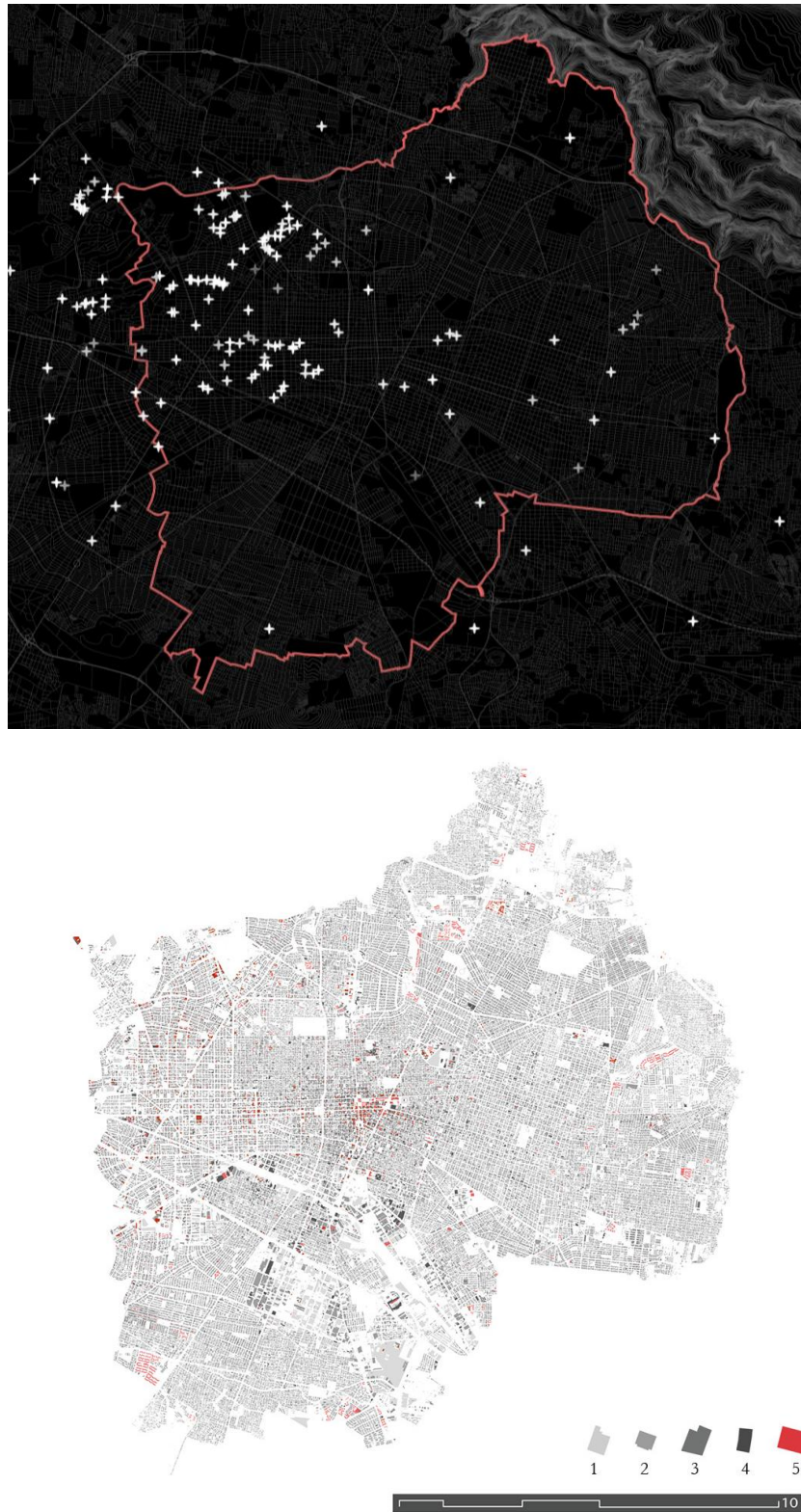


Figure 2. Location of new vertical housing developments (top) and every building in Guadalajara according to number of floors (bottom) **Source:** By the author from Cuadra Urbanismo, 2016 and cadastre data.

More than 10,000 new vertical dwellings are offered –or in process– in the central area of Guadalajara and the surrounding municipality of Zapopan (Cuadra Urbanismo, 2016). The overall majority is aimed at high-income segments, since the average cost of these new apartments is between two and five million pesos³. The discourse today follows that the new high-end dwellings built in the last years ‘inside’ the city will support a much-needed process of repopulation, especially within the Guadalajara municipality that since the 1990’s lost about 151,000 inhabitants (Cruz Solis, 2012). Therefore, such transformations inaugurate a new historical phase in the city’s development and morphology. A phase in which life in proximity could be encouraged, taking advantage of existing services, abating the indiscriminate use of the car, and limiting the unsustainable horizontal sprawl. However, instead of reducing the housing gap⁴ and recalibrating existing sociospatial inequalities, the rapid verticalization in Guadalajara rather accounts for the increasingly uneven power relations steering urbanization processes in many Latin American cities (Kaminer et al., 2011). Triggering a process of gentrification, understood as the production of space for progressively wealthier users (Hackworth, 2002). The role of the state in this configuration has been characterized by its incapacity to enforce urban regulations or at least to address and reshape urban policy in order to adapt the norms to the present situation, and to take into account the housing needs of the majority.



Figure 3. New residential towers in Guadalajara **Source:** By the author, and from Cuadra Urbanismo, 2016

The construction of vertical housing for the rich as strategy for repopulating Guadalajara actually goes against such goal. Redensification efforts through verticalization result in an increase of housing vacancy, since the huge majority of new dwellings remain unoccupied⁵.

³ Based in on-site surveys and through real estate agencies compiled through fieldwork during February – May 2016. Also see: Guillén 2016

⁴ In the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area there is at the same housing oversupply and housing deficit (Cuadra Urbanismo 2016)

⁵ This observation is based in on-site surveys conducted through fieldwork during February – May 2016. There is still no official data on this regard.

Thus, the rapid construction of luxury towers could be interpreted as a deployment of new infrastructure supporting a ‘reconquest’ of the central city by those who can afford it, however, the new conquerors have not arrived yet. The many urban voids of the city centre now are expanded vertically and dressed with high-class architecture, foreclosing any change to transform the urban environment based on people’s needs and desires. They’re the material negation of a right to the city (Harvey 2012). Moreover, such reinvestments increase the land value, making the central areas even more inaccessible to the low-income sectors, and accelerating a process of displacement of the vulnerable population who reside in the vicinities.

2.2 Retail gentrification in the historic centre

2.2.1 Transforming traditional markets. The case of the new ‘Mercado Corona’

The attempt of re-densifying Guadalajara through gentrification is not limited to the construction of the aforementioned high-class residences. The introduction of new consumerist practices that appropriate and transform the “symbolic capital” of the historic centres is also a the key strategy for the gentrification of many Latin American cities (Hiernaux-Nicolas & González-Gómez, 2014; Jones & Varley, 1999; Janoschka et al., 2013). This is done by the promotion of a cultural shift among the upper-middle classes, best understood as a recoding of meanings in urban space via the revalorization of history and architectural patrimony (Jones & Varley, 1999). This cultural shift is actively promoted through retail gentrification in the historic centre of Guadalajara, where the reconstruction of the traditional *Mercado Corona* coupled with the ‘cleaning’ of ambulant vendors delineates an exclusionary spatial order; a ‘partial’ conception of the urban that seeks to homogenize the inherent alterity of Mexican urbanism according to (upper-class) moral and spatial codifications (Jones & Varley, 1999; Smith, 1996). The *Mercado Corona* was the first market built by the municipality of Guadalajara in the year of 1888. Since the city’s foundation, the site where it now sits served many functions: a girl’s school during the first decades of the colony; a hospital which lasted almost 200 years until it was transferred to the new facilities of the *Hospital Civil* in 1794; and a municipal prison (Rueda Ruvalcaba, 2005). By the year of 1811, the old building which housed all these programs across history was finally demolished, making way to a new public space in the heart of the city. The site hosted since 1812 an open-air market called *Plaza de Venegas*. It is at this point in time when the market itself is born, and since then, this site has contributed to build the character of the metropolitan centre: a vibrant space full of commercial activities in which ‘popular’ cultures coalesce (Rueda Ruvalcaba, 2005). In May of 2014, the *Mercado Corona* was burned down under circumstances that most likely would never be clarified⁶. There are witnesses who claim that the fire was provoked, and the fact that the fire lasted for almost two days brings suspicion over the real motives of the disaster. Officially, the fire was caused accidentally by an electric power discharge. Shortly after the sinister, an architecture competition for the

⁶ See: El Universal. (2015)



Figure 4. Mercado Corona 1953 (left) and 2016 (right) **Source:** Archivo Municipal de Guadalajara and by the author

new building was launched, and the construction of the winning project started even faster. In first instance, the visual and aesthetic elements that the new architecture of the *Mercado Corona* rescripts in the historic centre encourages new consumer practices, which at the same time give a new meaning to the place. The architectural design of the new market is enough to depict this spatial rearticulation towards more expensive forms of consumption proper of commercial and retail gentrification (Dot et al., 2010; Janoshcka et al., 2013). In the previous market layout there was a relatively equal arrangement of commercial spaces in terms of size and position, however, the new market design introduces (by petition of the municipal government⁷) a number of ‘main commercial premises’, designed to accommodate previously inexistent large retail franchises and chain stores, located in the most privileged position in relation to the newly designed civic plaza along *Hidalgo* street. Moreover, the introduction of more than 500 parking spaces within the building perpetuates the car dependency so characteristic of the Mexican upper-middle classes (Jones & Varley, 1999). These minimal but nevertheless, symbolic features of the new market will necessarily signify a price increase in the overall products that are sold, as well as it will encourage a transition to more expensive forms of trade, services and products not just within the building itself, but also in the immediate surroundings. Symptoms of such requalification of place can be seen in the immediate surroundings. Newly renovated commercial buildings just one block away from the *Mercado Corona* display signs that read: “SE RENTA. SOLO FRANQUICIAS” [FOR RENT. FRANCHISES ONLY]. Local forms of trade are displaced in favour of big businesses [fig.5].



⁷ El Occidental (2014). “Contemplan “franquicias” en el nuevo Mercado Corona

Figure 5. Commercial building in the surroundings of Mercado Corona **Source:** By the author

2.3 Symbolic gentrification and *Tapatio*⁸ revanchism

2.3.1 *Recovering the civic spine*

Another manifestation of gentrification focuses on the amalgam of civic spaces articulated in the very heart of the city. This ‘civic spine’ is assembled through a variety of pedestrianized and semi-pedestrianized streets, as well as arcaded avenues, parks, terraces and civic plazas. This succession of open spaces gives a clear and readable structure to the centre, encompassing well-defined areas for walking, shopping and rest, moving and stopping. The open spaces unfolded by the civic spine can be considered as a separate tissue in contrast with the surrounding areas in the centre that are primarily residential. The surrounding heritage architecture serves as the scenery of this continuous sequence, which encourages different kinds of appropriations by all kinds of groups. However, since the completion of Plaza Tapatía –a public square that bridges both ends of the civic spine– the usage of public space has been determined by an intense and ‘disordered’ commercial activity during daytime, while during the evening the place remains practically empty, reinforcing the perception of insecurity, grubbiness and neglect. Against this backdrop, recent official discourses including expressions like “the centre of Guadalajara now has ‘owners’ which appropriate the space that belongs to everyone”; “we will recover the centre”; “the historic centre is ours”⁹, rather than illustrating a will to regenerate its allegedly disordered condition, hold an implicit revanchist class-oriented message (Smith, 1996; Slater, 2014; McLeod, 2002). ‘Recovering’ or ‘rescuing’ a place implies that it has been stolen or lost, but the fundamental question is from and by whom? This is answered in part through the new municipal program for ‘recovering’ and ‘ordering’ the historic centre, which consists in the removal, restructuring and relocation of the informal commerce from the city’s ‘first quarter’. To do so, the current municipal government (2015–2018) has proposed a new “special urban intervention polygon” [*Polígonos de Intervención Urbana Especial (PIUE)*] to carry out such actions more effectively [fig.6]. This entails the stigmatization of the people who continually appropriate and construct the place: the multitude of ambulant vendors and *tiangueros*¹⁰, a non-homogeneous group of people making a living outside the formal economy. Such strategies and discourses polarize public opinion, in which society gets confronted with a false dichotomy of either ‘recovering’ or ‘losing’ the most symbolic part of the city in the hands of vendors who “appropriate spaces that belong to everyone”¹¹, reducing the complexity of urban space into a moralist conception that serves the purposes of *tapatio* elites to establish a particular kind of order in the public space. Despite the fact that almost 60% of the economically-active population in Mexico belongs to the so called informal economy¹², it is curious to see that this ‘villainization’ of the street vendors with such expressions of revenge come from a wide sector of civil society, as can be observed in the social networks (Alfaro, 2015). Under these conditions, certain space appropriations like street vending become

⁸ Colloquial name given to those born in the city of Guadalajara, in the state of Jalisco, Mexico.

⁹ Media campaign of the new city Mayor available at: <https://www.facebook.com/EnriqueAlfaroR/videos/1048887211809117/>

¹⁰ Common name for vendors who work within street markets locally known as ‘*tianguis*’

¹¹ Media campaign of the new city Mayor available at: <https://www.facebook.com/EnriqueAlfaroR/videos/1048887211809117/>

¹² According to INEGI, in April 2015, 57.8% of the worker force in Mexico belonged to the informal sector. See: <http://www.inegi.org.mx/saladeprensa/aproposito/2015/trabajo0.pdf>

‘disappropriations’ (Jimenez-Dominguez, 2007) regulated by police control justifying a false dilemma between an exclusionary ‘order’ embodied in the commercial sector fully adherent to the law, and a pluralistic ‘disorder’ represented here by the informal practices and actors who make use of public space in order to survive. Within this setting, properly social aspects that assemble the spatial richness of place are not the priority, but the local state focuses in reshaping, recoding and reordering the everyday meanings of the civic spine through “policies and practices that are often advantageous to capital” (Weber, 2002, p.524). Moreover, such strategies are deployed appealing to the upper-middle classes by promoting a ‘safe’, ‘ordered’ and ‘clean’ city centre, without social undesirables such as *ambulantes*, and by co-opting progressive discourses of ‘walkability’ –locally advanced in the municipal program called *banquetas libres* (H. Ayuntamiento, 2015)– as justification for implementing a selective policing control on the public space. As ambulant vendors are displaced from the public space, not only the access to material needs is denied but also their ‘right to the city’ (Harvey, 2012), as well as the access to build a symbolic sense of place and belonging (Crossa, 2013; Rose, 1995). Such physical and symbolic violence exerted on the precarious working classes on the public space is an intrinsic dimension of gentrification processes in Latin America (Janoschka et al., 2013), giving continuity to the redensification strategies putted in place.



Figure 6. Civic spine of Guadalajara and contested retail spaces **Source:** Elaborated by the author

2.3.2 *Twofold revanchism and the politics of aesthetics.*

During the night of November 11th 2015, the Police of Guadalajara finally evicted all the ambulant vendors from the civic spine. As justification, the mayor of Guadalajara stated that he is fully aware that people work on the streets by necessity and not by choice, and the fundamental problem is that the street-vending tradition of Guadalajara has been ‘contaminated’ by the corruption, irresponsibility and greed of the past government (Alfaro, 2016). The previous ruling party, *Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)*, established a clientelist base among various leaders of street-vendor networks through corruption, allowing them to operate without interference of municipal inspectors¹³. The evictions therefore, attempt to dissolve existing networks of self-organized merchants whose leaders are supposedly tied to the political opposition¹⁴. In this sense, the program is revanchist (Smith 1996) not just because it attempts to impose forms of trade compatible with global markets as much as upper-middle class values and subjectivities (Jones & Varley, 1999), but it is also a revenge against the previous ruling party and its clientelist base who allowed the centre to become devoid of ‘order’, legality and “aesthetics”¹⁵. Nevertheless, such actions are carried out without really addressing –if not further polarizing sociospatial exclusion and inequality in the city. In this regard, we have to recognize that municipal governments can do very little to cope with the soaring inequality reigning in the country, but despite their institutional limitations, the ‘local state’ simply focuses in erasing –or at its most, beautifying– one of the most visible manifestations of urban poverty. With this panorama, the new authorities target the precarious workers that before were extorted by the clientelist mafias in order to operate, making them the real victims of both political and urban revanchism. Authorities of the public space now are offering ‘formal’ permits to displaced vendors who want to be reintroduced in the civic spine. However, this is done with the condition of complying with *aesthetic rules*: imposing them the use of specific urban furniture –provided by the municipality–, wearing during the workday a distinctive garment that identifies them as authorized traders, selling *only* those items which are deemed by authorities as traditional or visually Mexican, relocating them in spaces where they don’t ‘obstruct’ the view of landmarks and the free circulation of pedestrians, etc (Gobierno de Guadalajara, 2015). Furthermore, the restructuring of the few ambulant vendors who cooperate with authorities do not necessarily signify an improvement in their quality of life, as their social status only changes from ‘informal’ to ‘formal’ precariousness. However, this superficial perception of ‘formality’ and ‘order’ in the public space fits the agendas of elite coalitions, proving that such actions are performed to appropriate the symbolic capital of place (Jones & Varley, 1999) in order to “create conditions for the City Centre to become a pillar of economic growth in Guadalajara, through the promotion of public and private investment” (Gobierno de Guadalajara, 2015a), ultimately benefiting local and transnational elites, and not by far the poorest of Mexicans. Withal, the reordering of the historic centre is only one part of a wider city vision to ‘bring order’ to the city (Melgoza, 2016), where the scope of the authorities is not reduced to removing ambulant vendors who oppose regulation, but entails modifying the political-economic relationships and the cultural and affective bonds that build place by policing what can and what can’t be done in the public

¹³ Personal communication by anonymous public servant of Guadalajara.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ A public servant stated that the prime reason for removing the ambulant vendors is because they are not ‘aesthetical’ See: Robles, V. (2016).

space; which products and services are encouraged and which ones are discouraged or prohibited; who gets included and who gets excluded from such conception of the urban.

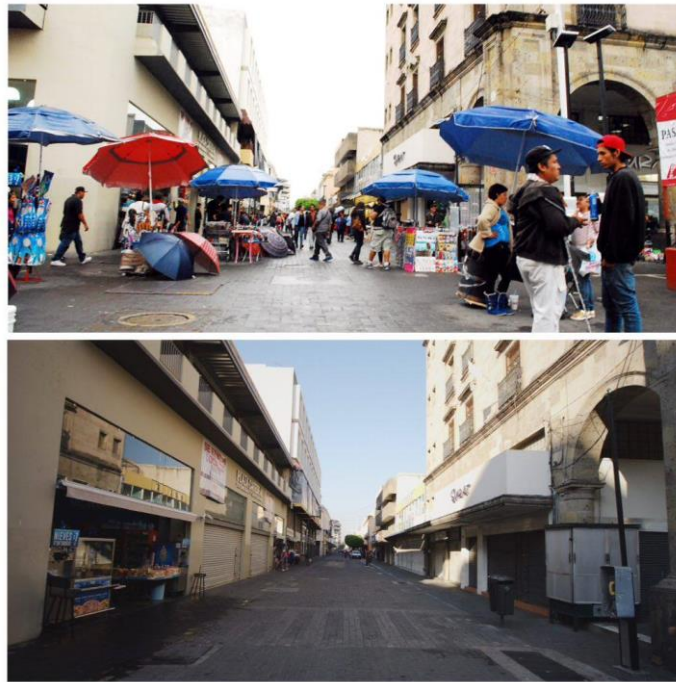


Figure 7. Before and after of street vending removal **Source:** Gobierno de Guadalajara, 2015

3. CONSTESTATIONS IN A POST-POLITICAL PANORAMA

After the crisis of suburbanization in the peripheries, and the appearance of an incredible amount of urban voids in the inner city, coupled with the pauperization of centre, gentrification processes in Guadalajara –whether, commercial or residential– have reached an intermediate phase in which the role of state is crucial. In the case of the historic centre, the state has played an active role by promoting a vengeful rearrangement of public space, and facilitating aggressive redevelopment operations that displace the cultural reproduction of place in favour of more expensive forms of consumption; while in the verticalization paradigm it has been characterized by an absence of vision and power over urban transformations, giving way to a post-political configuration facilitated by a “consensual fusion of state and private interests in [informal] public-private partnerships” (Swyngedouw, 2011:19). The drivers of gentrification in Guadalajara respond to an aspiration of projecting a competitive image in the global context. Therefore, the reinvestments take the form of aggressive redevelopment operations and revanchist transformations rather than restoration and/or conservation efforts, widely described in Latin American gentrification literature (Janoschka et al., 2013; Jones & Varley, 1999; Hiernaux-Nicolas & González-Gómez, 2014). The strategy of growth coalitions has been one of not just *appropriating* the symbolic and material capital of the centre in order to maximize the extraction of value from the city (Logan & Molotch, 1986; Weber, 2002), but to substitute in its entirety the social and physical features of urban space by reinterpreting it as a mere container ready to be filled with desirable types of citizens and lifestyles. In parallel, this contributes to creating a vision of the urban that does not necessarily attempts to erase the ‘popular’ character of the inner city, but to ‘upgrade’ it according to what is

perceived by the elites to be a 'higher' and better urbanism; one that draws upon creative class, (credit card based) bike-sharing, (selective) 'participation', and (white) human-centred discourses coming from the 'global north' as the main referents to shape the city, ignoring and homogenizing the constituent hybridity of Mexican urbanism. Ultimately, this consensual mode of excluding those who oppose such materializations and the revanchist transformation of the urban reveals the post-political fantasy that structures the city on the interests of the elites (Swyngedouw, 2011). Different political parties, private entrepreneurs, and government institutions coincide in the inevitability of state-backed capitalism and entrepreneurial forms of governance as precondition to adequately manage and rearrange the city (Crossa 2009; Swyngedouw, 2011; Harvey, 2001). By the time this article was written, the restructuring of ambulant vendors by the municipality has been actively contested, to the point that until today, the regulation and control exerted towards them has not been total. From the fieldwork we were able to see that unregulated street vending is still occurring. The surroundings of *Plaza Tapatía* which were conceived as immaculate places without informal vending, today display a lesser but nevertheless constant presence of *ambulantes*. The difficulty of enforcing zero-tolerance-like policies in the centre of Guadalajara allows a myriad of subversions and contestations. Members of the association of street artisans have continued to work on the civic spine despite their criminalization. They were able to negotiate with municipal authorities to concede them 'temporal' permits. In parallel, other street merchants associations have been regularly taking the streets in public manifestations against their 'rearrangement' (El Informador, 2015). On the other hand, tenants of the *Mercado Corona* have also overcome some of the material effects of gentrification. Taking advantage of the shifting political climate, the merchants were able to organize an effective resistance to displacement by securing lifetime concessions to operate inside the market; nevertheless, the symbolic dimensions of gentrification are more than visible.

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